

Classic Poetry Series

Patricia Goedicke
- poems -

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Patricia Goedicke()

Patricia Goedicke (June 21, 1931 – July 14, 2006) was an American poet.

Born Patricia McKenna in Boston, Massachusetts, she grew up in Hanover, New Hampshire, where her father was a resident psychiatrist at Dartmouth College. During her high school years she was an accomplished downhill skier. She earned her B.A. at Middlebury College in 1953, where she studied with Robert Frost. She also studied under W. H. Auden at Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York City in 1955.

She married in 1956 Victor Goedicke, a professor at Ohio University, where in 1965 she completed her M.A. in creative writing and poetry. She divorced in 1968, the same year that while an artist in residence at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, she met Leonard Wallace Robinson. He was a writer for *The New Yorker* and a fiction editor and book editor at *Esquire Magazine*. They married in 1971. The couple later moved to San Miguel de Allende in the Mexican state of Guanajuato, where she taught creative writing at the Universidad de Guanajuato. Goedicke and Robinson returned to the United States in 1981, and she became professor to the University of Montana, where she taught until her retirement in 2003.

Her awards and honors include the Rockefeller Foundation Residency at its Villa Serbelloni; a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship; a Pushcart Prize; the William Carlos Williams Prize; the 1987 Carolyn Kizer Prize; the Hohenberg Award, and the 1992 Edward Stanley Award from *Prairie Schooner*. Her last book was recognized as one of the top 10 poetry books of 2000 by the American Library Association. *The Tongues We Speak* was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year in 1990.

Goedicke died of pneumonia and a complication of lung cancer, at St. Patrick Hospital and Health Sciences Center in Missoula, Montana.

Without Looking

Either at my friend's daughter's
sixteen-year-old body dumped
on the morgue slab, T-shirt
stuck fast to one ripped
breast I identified quick, and then
got out of there

or at the old gentleman
with tubes in the living room, spittle
stained in his wispy
beard, out of
the corner of my eye I hardly
notice it, how

could I, drink in hand
at five-thirty, at the least
sign of pain one of us always itches
to turn away, another turns
over in sleep, groans
O, we who are so lucky

just to be able to
ignore, go back
quick, to our books, to
have books, even, how
difficult it is to look
hard and head
on has not been said

often enough, if prayer
is an act of attention
even to dropped stitches, blood
dangling beneath the lines, the
poem? I said,
what prepares us for what
will never save us?

Anonymous submission.

Patricia Goedicke